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ABSTRACT

In this speech, the author addresses the issue of how school administrators can be formally evaluated. A plan is described for evaluating administrators that has as its primary purpose improving their performance and stimulating their growth. The plan integrates supervision and evaluation; is individualized and consistent with sound educational philosophy; and can be applied equally to students, teachers, and administrators. The paper also identifies several possible barriers to the acceptance and adoption of a performance improvement program and suggests some strategies to help clear those barriers. (Author/DN)

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Although personnel evaluation has always rated a seminar or two at this convention, it's only been within the past several years that the focus has been how we are to be evaluated. Previously it was taken for granted, at least by administrators, that evaluation was something which happened only to teachers.

This is not to say that administrators escaped scrutiny. Line officers, particularly principals and superintendents, have always undergone intensive evaluation of an informal nature by parents, other interested publics, teachers, custodians, and even some junior and senior high students. However, not until the 1970's has there been much call for formal evaluation of administrators. Though it is true most of the initial pressure for evaluating administrative performance has come from outside our ranks:

> School boards pressing for a greater degree of accountability than ever before;
> Teachers expressing the opinion that if they are to be evaluated on a formal basis so too should the administrators; Citizens demanding quality in return for the ever increasing expenditure on education, and expecting answers to such pointed questions as, "Do your services really make any difference in the lives of the children, youth, and adults you serve?"; and
> State legislators, disenchanted with educators for failing to make the changes which, at least to them, appear to be both urgent and easy to make, enacting laws mandating the evaluation of school administrators and teachers;

it will not be necessary to drag most of us into formal performance evaluation. In ever increasing numbers we are recognizing the potential benefits of a well thought out, systematic administrative evaluation program. Among them:

> Numerous school districts attempting management by objectives and program budgeting systems have discovered that a sound evaluation program is an essential component of such ventures;
>
> For a group of administrators to become an effective management team, acceptance of the proposition that individuals should be accountable for the part of the system they are assigned to manage is a must;
>
> Effective principals influence the excellence of teaching and learning. An evaluation plan which stimulates the principal to improve can make a significant impact on both.

Nevertheless, whether because we think it is a good idea and want to do it or because we are compelled by law or public pressure to do so, there is no question in my mind

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but that most, if not all, of the school systems throughout the country will soon be making formal evaluations of their school administrators. How, not if, is the question.

Our response will determine, in our respective districts, whether evaluation stimulates leadership and encourages improvement efforts, or results in the spread of senseless cliche rating systems, plus a lot of paper shuffling, non-directional activity, and purposeless tension and negativism.

"How" is without doubt a crucial question.

In the time remaining, I would like to do three things:

First, propose an answer by briefly describing a plan for the evaluation of administrators that has as its primary purposes improving performance and stimulating growth; a plan which:

a. Integrates supervision and evaluation.
b. Is individualized and consistent with sound educational philosophy, and which
c. Can be applied equally to students, teachers and administrators.

While it is recognized that no single model will fit the needs of all districts, the evaluation process I'm proposing, with appropriate modifications and refinements, is being used by a growing number of school districts around the country, including my own district, Hyde Park. I consider this the Redfern approach to evaluation, since it is based on the work of Dr. George Redfern, Deputy Executive Secretary of AASA.

Second, identify several possible barriers to the acceptance and adoption of a performance improvement program in your district, and -

Third, suggest some strategies which have helped others to clear these barriers.

The Evaluation Process

First, the process.

In brief, at the start of an evaluation period the administrator and his evaluator agree on a few specific objectives for the year, and also develop a plan for achieving them, including the help the administrator can expect from his evaluator. Once the administrator and evaluator have mutually agreed upon the objectives or job targets as they are often called, the evaluator is obligated to provide every reasonable assistance in aiding the administrator to accomplish them.

Also agreed on at the start of the evaluation period are the desired outcomes, the criteria on which decisions regarding the extent to which the job targets are reached will be made. Early agreement regarding what will be mutually accepted as evidence of achievement helps prevent confusion, disagreement, and ambiguity at the end.

Although the actual objectives vary from administrator to administrator, and from year to year, all tend to fall into three broad categories:

a. Personal - objectives which contribute to the growth and development of the individual administrator,

b. Organizational - objectives which pertain to the administrators' particular function, whether it is a school, the district's business division, or the lunch program, and

c. System - objectives which relate to the job targets of the Superintendent or to other system wide goals.

As soon as the objectives and a plan for achieving them have been agreed to, the process of implementing the plan begins. Working both independently and with assistance from his evaluator and others, the administrator moves toward achievement of his job targets.

During this period the administrator's performance is monitoried through a variety of techniques. This is the evidence gathering part of the total process. Evidence is assembled that will be helpful in determining the degree to which the mutually agreed to objectives are being or have been achieved. No judgments are made during this phase, however, the evaluator shares with the administrator any information which may help him progress toward the targets. Although this feedback often pertains to difficulties the administrator is experiencing, evidence of success is also freely conveyed. Recognition of good work helps stimulate confidence and often leads to even high performance levels.

Near the end of the evaluation period, the administrator makes a self-analysis of the year's work in relation to his job targets. Among the questions he asks himself are:

a. What did I hope to accomplish?
b. What succeeded?
c. What failed? Why?
d. Was the help I received adequate?
e. Did I do my share?

While the administrator is making his self-evaluation, the evaluator makes a judgment as to the degree to which he believes the administrator accomplished the objectives. In arriving at his judgment, the evaluator considers not only the nature of the results achieved, but also factors that may have affected these results. For example, if unforeseen events beyond the administrator's control prevented full realization of the desired results, this is recognized in the evaluation. And, if the administrator did not achieve his objectives, the evaluator must also ask himself whether this can be attributed, to some degree, to a failure on his part to follow through on a commitment that he made in the very beginning.

The administrator and evaluator then conference to consider the extent to which the administrator accomplished each target. Usually the conference yields ideas for follow up action; with both the administrator and evaluator seeing the need for certain kinds of follow up action to reenforce gains made. The conference is also a time to begin discussing possible objectives for the next round of evaluation.

Although the primary focus of the evaluation conference is the specific job targets for the year, generally an overall evaluation of the administrator's performance in each major area of responsibility is also on the agenda. All areas of responsibility must be met, at least with a reasonable degree of effectiveness. Neither the administrator nor his evaluator can neglect or ignore those responsibilities that don't happen to be special objectives for the year.

Following the conference the administrator is given a copy of the evaluation report

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which will be sent to the personnel office. Included is an assessment of the degree of accomplishment of each objective, as well as an overall evaluation in each major performance area. The administrator signs the report to indicate he has received it, and also adds a dissenting statement if he does not agree with, or wishes to expand on any part of it.

Before moving on to "problems" and "strategies," I'd like to expand briefly on several aspects of this performance improvement evaluation process. Though touched on in the overview, they represent marked departures from most conventional evaluation programs and merit special mention.

1. Those being evaluated participate in the setting of the objectives and standards of performance on which they will be assessed. This has several important benefits:

    a. People tend to work harder and derive greater satisfaction when they accomplish goals set by themselves, also
    b. When the administrator and evaluator agree at the outset upon desired outcomes, there is a much greater likelihood they will be able to concur on the evaluation report.

2. The administrator and evaluator are the developers of the criteria against which performance is judged, therefore, the evaluation is highly individualized and based on the individual's unique capacity for performance and growth. Diversity in administrative style is also recognized and encouraged. This is consistent with present day thinking that principals, for example, may operate a school in many different ways, depending on the conditions, as long as <u>planned achievement</u> takes place.

3. The process is designed to help individuals evaluate their own performance in positive and constructive ways, and to use this self evaluation as a basis for improvement. Let's face it, nobody can improve an administrator except that administrator himself. Others may urge him to improve, explain how he can improve, model improved administrative behavior for him, or even threaten him with dire consequences if he doesn't improve. However, in the last analysis it is the administrator who must do his own improving.

4. A very important aspect of the process is the evaluator's commitment to give assistance to the person being evaluated. The administrator and evaluator, in effect become partners. Evidence of the administrator receiving assistance is mandatory. Although the evaluator does not personally have to provide all the help, he is responsible for seeing that assistance is provided from appropriate sources. The specific help in each case is determined by the nature of the job targets and the administrator's need for assistance.

5. The monitoring and collection of data relative to achievement of the administrator's targets is a continuous process with the primary purpose being to keep everyone informed. It may become necessary to modify the objectives should they prove to be unrealistic. Or, it may be a target will be met mid-way through the year. Changes in objectives or the decision to add or omit one or more are valid actions if made

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deliberately. And if the administrator is having difficulty with one or more target, this can be determined early enough for action to be taken in time to help rather than waiting until the end of the year.

6. The number of objectives to be focused on during an evaluation period is purposely limited. No one can be expected to improve his work simultaneously in every category and in all respects. Therefore, to increase the likelihood the desired improvement will occur, only a few specific areas are selected for special attention.

Problems

"If the process is so great," you're probably asking yourself about now, "why isn't everybody doing it?"

Good question. Let's take a look at some of the reasons.

Perhaps the major barrier to acceptance and adoption of a performance improvement evaluation program is the negative attitude of many teachers and administrators toward evaluation. They consider it something that someone else does to them. Teachers and administrators feel threatened, and if you consider what has been and still is being practiced in the name of evaluation, this is not surprising:

1. Although its long been proclaimed that the essential purpose of evaluation is to assist all persons to do a better job and to improve the educational program, in practice evaluation has been primarily for administrative purposes--such as tenure, promotion, dismissal, and salary--which have some ominous and threatening implications.

2. Check lists and rating scales which emphasize what the individual is, his personal worth, rather than what he achieves, are customarily used. The predetermined standards and characteristics are usually past-oriented, focus on fault-finding, and are not only subjective but may even have a very low priority in the whole scheme of things. Perhaps the classic example of this evaluative trivia was cited by Norman Scharer, President-elect of AASA, in a speech to the School Management Institue sponsored Third National conference on Teacher Evaluation this past October. He called attention to school districts where, believe it or not, the evaluator was required to rate both body odor and breath--Unacceptable performance, Needs Improvement, Average or Above Average.

It's no wonder that in some cases persons evaluated lose sleep prior to the day of reckoning, and that others refuse to meet with their evaluator except in the presence of an attorney.

Nor is it surprising that many evaluations have been only a mild pat-on-the-back, and that in many cases there has been no evaluation at all--not even the pretense of one.

The lack of any great enthusiasm by many principals for evaluation can be at least partly attributed to the fact they have been required to do the traditional rating of teachers with all its serious shortcomings. Given the prevalent purposes and procedures, they have come to feel that to judge or evaluate another person is essentially a negative, a presumptious, or perhaps an inhuman or improper act.

Although much of what has been and still being practiced in the name of evaluation is the major hurdle that must be cleared there are other obstacles. Let me briefly cite a few:

1. Lack of a clear understanding of job functions and responsibilities. Evaluation

of an object- whether person, performance, or behavior--can be accomplished only if there is an idea of what the object should be like.

2. A tendency on the part of some to equate evaluation with observation. Although particularly true of teacher evaluation, this is also true of administrative evaluation.

3. Lack of skill, knowledge, and understanding relative to performance evaluation. We've been trained and expected to behave as directors, as authorities, and as people who make sure that our subordinates carry out decisions made for them by others. However, performance evaluation programs, such as I'm proposing, require us to be facilitators--establishing a climate for change, dealing with conflict, monitoring decisions and actions without directing them, supporting the efforts of others, opening communication channels, and so forth. At present most of us are not equipped to work in such a facilitating manner. The idea of the evaluatee playing what could be termed a dominant role is bound to be unsettling to some. Likewise those of us who have become used to implementing the decisions of others may have difficulty in adapting to a participatory decision-making mode.

4. Finally, just accepting the idea that performance evaluation of administrative personnel is a necessity may be a problem for some. Though well established in business and industry, it has not been as common in education. This stems from the fact that, historically, school systems had smaller and less complex organizational structures. In such circumstances the top administrator knew his subordinates intimately and often felt he did not need a formal procedure for evaluating their performance. Though school districts have grown larger and more complex in recent years, development of performance evaluation programs has lagged behind.

Strategies

OK, you're convinced performance improvement evaluation makes sense, and you have the responsibility for planning an administrative evaluation program for your school district. Where do you begin? Whom should you involve? What decisions need to be made? How rapidly should you try to implement the procedures?

First let me say just believing that performance improvement evaluation is desirable and will enable the administrators in your district to improve their work is not enough--it will not automatically happen. You're going to have to work hard for it, and probably spend some money, too. Developing and initiating a performance improvement evaluation program requires investment in planning, orientation, and training--these are start up costs that can't be avoided if you want to get the desired results.

1. One of the first things you must do is sell your superintendent on the idea of instituting a leadership evaluation program, or if you're the superintendent make sure the Board is aware of the need and will give it support. The superintendent, his assistants and the Board must perceive evaluation as an important function and take pains to make its importance and their commitment clear to the other members of the administrative staff. Unless this happens, all that follows is likely to reflect vagueness, carelessness, and indifference.

A major obstacle to the development of positive performance evaluation programs has been the fact superintendents and administrators have not given sufficient attention or time to the upgrading of administrative performance on the job.

One important way of demonstrating commitment is by providing adequate time. Performance

evaluation requires a great deal of time--time for planning, time for visits, time for conferences, time for followup, and so on.

2. The purposes of the evaluation program must be determined at the start. If the program is to be successful, these purposes must be identified, discussed, and agreed upon by all who are involved in the process. Level with the other administrators in your district. Tell them you are committed to try to improve the district, both as a place to be and a place to work. Assure them the primary purpose of evaluation is to improve not weed out, and indicate your own desire to improve, and to receive feedback and suggestions. However, don't mislead them. If you anticipate the results of evaluation may also be used for administrative purposes--such as tenure, promotion, dismissal, and so forth--make sure this is clear from the start, too. But keep the emphasis on improvement of performance and minimize the administrative aspects.

3. One of the initial steps for a district developing and administrator performance evaluation program is determining and clarifying the scope of the administrator's job. Unless an administrator knows what is expected of him, he cannot function effectively.

Administrative responsibilities fall into several major performance categories, such as administration and organization, business management, curriculum and instruction, pupil personnel, school-community relations, staff personnel, and auxiliary services. Within each major category, standards of performance must be developed for each administrative position. These statements or standards of performance clarify the duties and responsibilities of each position, suggest the skills or expertise required, describe optimum behavior for an administrator within his area of responsibility, and establish guidelines which enable the administrator and his evaluator to judge how well the administrator is performing.

4. Perhaps the most important step in developing the evaluation program is involving the people who will be evaluated. This is an absolute necessity. To design an evaluation program at the top of an organization and impose it on those who have to implement it is to invite failure. Those to be affected by the program must participate in its design, installation, administration, and review.

One of the chief stumbling blocks to many evaluation programs is a credibility gap that develops between evaluatees and evaluators, often arising from lack of understanding and the evaluatees suspicions of the evaluators motives and integrity.

Cooperative planning goes a long way toward preventing this. When those affected help with the hard work of hammering out agreement on purposes, standards of performance, and evaluation procedures they are more likely to understand them, agree to their appropriateness, and live with them, than they otherwise would be.

If your administrative staff is too large to involve all members in the development process, form a working committee composed of a representative group. However, don't fail to keep all the administrators fully informed throughout the entire planning period and to give them opportunities to contribute.

5. Be wary of packaged kits of criteria, manufactured guidelines, and the like, which are claimed to fit every job in every district under every situation. No single evaluation design fits the needs of all. If you're going to have a positive performance evaluation program it will need to be developed right on the firing line in your district. Even if you purchase the finest guidelines in the world, it is the people who work together in your district who actually decide what will be.

However it's not necessary to spend time reinventing the wheel, either. You can benefit from the experience of others. With your administrative staff, investigate evaluation systems as thoroughly as possible by reviewing periodicals, books and sample evaluation systems that emphasize goal-oriented approaches. Also be sure to examine what other school districts have done.

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And don't wait to develop the perfect system before beginning. Your program will probably be in a perpetual state of refinement. In fact I'd encourage you to seriously consider initiating the program with a pilot project to help assure a sound phasing in.

6. Considerable effort must be given to inservice training. Both evaluatees and evaluators need time to absorb new ideas and master the skills involved. Workshops should include practical experience in writing job targets and opportunities to engage in role-playing in mock conferences where targets are identified and mutually agreed to and end of year evaluations discussed. If possible, invite administrators from districts with similar evaluation programs, as well as other consultants, to work with your staff at least during the early stages.

7. Make plans to systematically review the evaluation program — at least annually during the first several years, and every second or third year thereafter. In analyzing the evaluation process, seek answers to such questions as:

a. Is administrative performance improving?
b. Are administrators receiving assistance?
c. Are administrators with problems improving?
d. Do administrators understand what is expected of them?
d. Do administrators understand what is expected of them?
e. Is the Board and superintendent provided adequate information for making personnel and policy decisions?

8. Finally, do all you can to keep performance evaluation away from the collective bargaining table since that is likely to complicate the process. As I've already emphasized, the development of the plan should have active involvement of all those affected, even formal involvement of the employee organization if your administrators are so organized. However, I think it is much better to handle the planning in a professional way, as members of an administrative team, than to try to reach agreement in the adversary atmosphere of the bargaining room.

This completes my assignment for the morning, "Administrative Evaluation: Problems Process and Strategies." I hope that during the discussion period I'll have the opportunity to tell you about our experience with the process in Hyde Park. I'm sold on this approach to evaluation, and believe it's doing a great deal for the growth and development of the members of our administrative staff. Should you want copies of the materials we've developed, drop me a line and I'll send them to you.

To sum up and conclude, I'd like to quote from an article by William Pharis, Executive Director of the Elementary Principals Association in the February, 1973 issue of "The National Elementary Principal":

> "Despite the obvious inadequacies of present procedures, principals should be--and want to be evaluated. They do, however, want a system that: (1) assures reality, (2) considers only the variables that can be controlled, (3) spells out clearly and ahead of time what the principals are to be measured against, (4) is not subject to different conclusions by different evaluators, and (5) permits principals to have some voice in determining goals."
>
> "All these necessities are satisfied by a job target procedure, which is a personalized adaptation of the management by objectives approach."